



HOTEL ASSOCIATION OF CANADA
ASSOCIATION DES HÔTELS DU CANADA

NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release:

Canadians Drive to the U. S. For Less Expensive Airline Tickets Latest Results From 2011 Canadian Travel Intentions Survey

February 16, 2011 - Ottawa -- More and more Canadians are travelling by car to the United States to purchase less expensive airline tickets says data released today from the Hotel Association of Canada (HAC) 2011 Canadian Travel Intentions survey.

Twenty-one per cent of leisure travellers said they travelled by car to a United States airport in 2010 to take a trip using less expensive airline tickets purchased for U.S. or foreign travel, and an additional 11 per cent said although they had not done so in the past, they might travel to the U.S. for cheaper travel in 2011. This is up from 18 per cent from 2010.

“This has the potential for almost one third of Canadian travellers spending money on foreign airline tickets and taking flights outside of Canada. The dollar at par and high costs for Canadian airports and travel mean that Canadian air carriers are at a distinct disadvantage and cannot offer the prices to match those in the United States”, said Tony Pollard, President of the Hotel Association of Canada. “This growing trend has serious consequences for the Canadian travel industry and needs to be addressed by the reduction of airport fees, travel security costs and airline surcharges”.

Travel is Up

Eighty-three per cent of leisure travellers said they will be travelling in 2011. This is up from 78 per cent in 2010.

Seventy-six per cent of business travellers said they will be travelling in 2011; a figure consistent with 2010. However in Ontario business travel will be up 5 per cent year over year.

Social Media and Travellers

Seventy-three per cent of leisure and 86 per cent of business travellers use the Internet to gather information before they book travel.

“The top five things travellers are looking for on the Internet are special travel offerings, photos, maps, accommodation ratings and amenities,” said Mr. Pollard. “The number of travellers reading testimonials from other travellers, consulting blogs and writing about hotels on Twitter and Facebook is also increasing.”

Almost twice as many business over leisure travellers are actively Tweeting and posting on Facebook (22% business; 12% leisure).

Of all the things business travellers are looking at on the Internet, star and diamond ratings, testimonials from other travellers, videos, travel blogs and social media influence topped the list. Almost 60 per cent of business travellers and 54 per cent of leisure travellers said that star and diamond ratings on internet booking services have the most influence on their travel choices. This is up 7 per cent from 2010. The same number of leisure travellers (46%) and 11 per cent more business (49%) travellers than 2010 said testimonials/comments by previous travellers influence them. Videos have the same amount of influence on travel choices as the 2010 survey (43% business; 47%leisure). The influence of travel blogs is up almost 10 per cent over 2010 survey results with 25 business and 21 per cent leisure travellers acknowledging that blogs influence them. Social media has more influence on business travellers (17%, almost double 2010 results) than on leisure travellers (13%, up 4% over last year’s results).

Mobile Phones and Blackberry

For the first time, the HAC Travel Intentions Survey included questions on mobile phone/blackberry use. The majority (39%) said they use their Smartphone to check the weather. Paranoid about missing connections or worried about flights being delayed, 27 per cent of travellers check departure and arrival times. Thirty-two per cent of travellers said they use GPS and/or get directions on their mobile phones or blackberries. Facebook is becoming more and more popular with 20 per cent of travellers indicating they use it to check their messages and update their status on Facebook. Nineteen per cent book hotels and 11 per cent book air, train, or bus tickets on their Smartphones. Four per cent said that they use their Blackberries and mobile phones to Tweet.

“The travel industry in Canada has to continue to adapt to new technology. With travellers Tweeting about their hotel experience while in the lobby means that customer service, cleanliness and the overall look of the accommodation is vitally important”, said Mr. Pollard.

Environment Still Important

“More and more Canadian travellers are calling for hoteliers to look at their environmental offerings”, said Mr. Pollard.

Thirty-seven per cent said environmental initiatives such as water recycling and energy efficiency are important to them. Thirty-six per cent said it is important for hotels to have green products. Thirty per cent said a hotel with an environmental certification program is important to them.

Twenty-seven per cent said the ability to purchase carbon credits is very important to them, up 6 per cent from 2010. Thirteen per cent said their company has a green travel policy, up 2 per cent from 2010 and 8 per cent from 2009. Forty-five per cent of all travellers said they would pay \$1 or more to offset their stay at a property (carbon credits).

The survey of Canadian travellers is the seventh annual Canadian Travel Intention study undertaken by the Hotel Association of Canada. This survey was fielded by TSN Canadian Facts and defines a traveller as someone who will stay at least one night in a hotel, motel or resort. The online survey was conducted in January 2011 among 1,627 “likely travellers” with a margin of error of +/- 2.4%.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Hotel Association of Canada

The Hotel Association of Canada (HAC) is a professional industry association representing the lodging industry in Canada. Its membership encompasses the provincial and territorial hotel associations, the corporate hotel chains, independent hotels, motels and resorts and the many suppliers to the hotel industry. HAC’s objective is to assist both its national and international members as they endeavour to enhance their competitiveness and achieve their bottom line. The HAC accomplishes this through advocacy, the collection and dissemination of information, research, education, and operational support services designed to assist its members. The Hotel Association of Canada represents more than 8,400 hotels, motels and resorts across Canada.

www.hotelassociation.ca.

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